

MARLENE MIYANO MASADA

AS TOLD TO ALTHEA LARSEN TORLIATT

May 20, 1993

Althea: This is the 20th of May 1993. I am at the home of Marlene Miyano Masada #260 Lohrman Lane Petaluma, Ca.. We have just finished looking at Marlene's beautiful garden. We had a great time looking at her beautiful garden and sweet peas. She showed me around her house. And now we are going to ask some questions and Marlene will answer them as best she can. Okay? The first thing I wanted to know is how and when did you get to Petaluma? Do you remember? Were you born here?

Marlene: I was born in Penngrove. That house I just showed you. The Elphick home.

Althea: And then you stayed there for how long?

Marlene: Until I was about seven.

Althea: And then your parents bought the home on Skillman Lane. Did you buy it?

Marlene: Oh no, you couldn't buy it. Aliens couldn't --but then my father

Althea: Did Jim (Marlene's oldest brother) buy it?

Marlene: Oh no, Jim wasn't of age. Then we had to buy a name. I think we bought the name Nakano. So our place was called Nakano Farms. And then when my brother got of age it was transferred to him. Those were the days when aliens couldn't own land

Althea: Then when your father was on the Elphick ranch your dad was in the chicken business

Marlene: Yes he was and then he just rented. He didn't have any ownership of it.

Althea: How did he know to go about the chicken business?

Marlene: There is a blank because I never really got in to all of that. They were too busy making a living. All I know is that he came from Watsonville and I think he worked in Sebastopol. He must have had a friend but I don't know who but then he rented that place. My brother Jim would have probably known but he is not alive.

Althea: That's interesting because a lot of people started in the chicken business and how did they know how to go about it. Because that was a pretty big operation that your dad had. Do you know how many chickens he had?

Marlene: I don't know. He had in those days I would say --he had about 20,000.

Marlene was 73 in January 1993.



Althea: Did you kids have to help?(laughing) Silly question (laughing)

Marlene: Oh yes, night and day you know no hired help --just the kids-

Althea: What did you do? What were your chores?

Marlene: You name it- feeding the chickens-gathering the eggs and cleaning the eggs until late at night so school work came secondary, you know-on the school bus I would do my home work or late at night because we were always wiping the eggs.

Althea: Who did you sell the eggs to?

Marlene: We used to sell to Ben Gold. He came out of the city--Nye and Nisson too, I think.

Althea: Who did you buy the feed from?

Marlene: Golden Eagle-

Althea: What do you remember best about your growing up years?

Marlene: You mean on the chicken farm--Oh-- well you know even though we lived on the chicken farm we had lot of fun growing up though-you know- there was my brother Sam and- I used to do most things with my brother Sam-and we used to do all kinds of things--we lived on 8 acres so and my father used to take us to town. He went to town once a week and he would give Sam and me 50 cents. For those days that was big money and he would tell us to go buy what ever we want. So we went down to the 15 cent store and bought some junk. You know. We'd buy some ice cream and that was a big thing--you know

Althea: A big treat-

Marlene: A big treat every week-

Althea: So you were closer to Sam--

Marlene: Growing up we were- I was close to Sam.

Althea: Do you remember doing eggs when you were on the Elphick ranch?

Marlene: No-

Althea: You didn't do them then --you were too young.

Marlene: All I remember growing up on the Elphick ranch-the earliest recollection I remember is getting on a chair and doing the dishes-because my mother had to do the outside work.

Althea: What did she do?

Marlene: She must have raised the baby chicks-and all that-I remember getting a chair and washing dishes at the sink-

Althea: And you dried them?

Marlene: Oh no, no-

Althea: Who dried them?

Marlene: I think when we moved Lilly was about one year old or something and she was much younger- I did them all-when we came to the



Skillman Lane ranch- I think I was about nine or ten and I used to have to handle all the cooking and all that stuff-

Althea: Did you have to plan the meals?

Marlene: My father would plan it. My father would tell me what to cook. He would get me an apple box and in those days that is what we had to stand on to reach the stove. Then do the washing. We had a washing machine but for the hot water we had to burn the wood outside and then we would bring it in in a wash tub into the washing machine. And then later on we had hot water. In the winter because it was the type of stove that the pipes would heat the water. It was a short while that we had to heat the water outside so we must have had it inside.

Althea: Did your parents have other friends that they would get together with?

Marlene: We had friends that used to come up --there was this lady that made this sponge cake. It was so good. I don't know how she did it. The first school that I went to was the Eagle School and then they built the new Penngrove School and then we moved to the Skillman Lane ranch and I went to the Wilson School. And my first teacher was Miss Gekkler. And in those days you didn't go home and tell your parents you didn't like that teacher you know--those days you don't-

Althea: Do you remember anything special that was fun to do-

Marlene: At Wilson School- I remember--there was Play Days when other schools used to come. And I remember I always wanted to be in the plays--they had a room that had all those costumes and I used to go through and think I would like to wear that or that thing. And then I used to go to the wood shed there and I had sushi and you and I would trade I would give you the sushi and you'd give me your sandwich. And then I remember your sandwich I never saw brown bread before. You used to have the brown bread. And we'd exchange and you'd eat my sushi and I eat your sandwich.

Althea: I don't remember that.

Marlene: You don't. I always tell my friends that. You had some kind of meat in the sandwich.

Althea: Pot roast. My mother always gave me pot roast. I loved egg salad sandwich.

Marlene: Well, maybe I had an egg salad sandwich because we used to exchange. At home I never had egg salad sandwich. I don't remember egg sandwich at home with all those eggs we had. No!

Althea: Oh for heaven sakes you didn't make a meal out of-

Marlene: No, you are talking about egg salad with mayonnaise --no- fried egg sandwich we had but I don't remember making that salad--well when



someone asks me about Wilson School I always say I met this girl Althea and we used to exchange sandwiches and we ate in the wood shed we did yeah.

Althea: I remember we used to make those houses with the Eucalyptus pods and we made those houses-

Marlene: I remember that too under that tree-

Althea: We had more fun making those houses-I don't think we ever got around to playing house-

Marlene: Yeah, really that was fun! But I used to love being in those plays.

Althea: We used to have a lot of plays. Do you remember any special kind of toy that you had- Did you celebrate Christmas?

Marlene: No we didn't-we used to get little trees from outside and then later on I remember my father bought a Christmas tree - it was so tall it hit the ceiling in our living room. We didn't have much ornaments to put on the tree was so tall -I guess he thought that would make us happy which it did but from then on I think we had trees but that was when we were younger-

Althea: What about-- Did you have a Dr.?

Marlene: Yes--Dr. People he lived on Washington St. Once I had the mumps and my dad thought he would get me something to make me happy so he buys me this jaw breaker-you can't get it in your mouth- so I do remember that-

Althea: No major health scares?

Marlene: My mother got her sweater caught in the pump and it pulled her arm and they don't have skin grafts and I came out and saw all that blood- Her arm was all cut up- (unintelligible-this tape or tape recorder is terrible)

Althea: Did your parents speak English or did you children have to help them?

Marlene: Oh yes, my parents could speak enough English to do business with the salesmen. My dad never called us- Come out here there is this salesmen trying to sell me feed- He did it himself-oh yeah--

Althea: Now we are talking about when he was doing this business-were the people kind?

Marlene: I don't remember him saying they weren't-

Althea: They accepted him-

Marlene: I think so-

Althea: Do you feel the children at school were friendly to you?

Marlene: Yes-- at little country schools there were all different kinds of nationalities and we all came off of the farms so you had everything in



common so-;

Althea: Were there any special feed stores or stores that you liked- you said you liked to go to the five and dime you liked to go -Did you buy your clothes at the store?

Marlene: I remember when we were out at Penngrove -my mom made this dress with all this smocking and a little ruffle around the skirt- my dad would buy most of our clothes and bring them home cause most my father did all the shopping-and bread and such he used to go to the U.S. Bakery you remember and he used to buy us the milk bread he would get about four loaves not sliced - it was nice and warm and we used to pull off pieces and put butter on it- it was so good! ( the tape keeps cutting out-I am losing lots of good conversation)

Althea: How old were you when you got married?

Marlene: 22

Althea: Did you have any special jobs?

Marlene: My older brother didn't want me going out to the city. No- I mainly worked on the farm.

Althea: How did you feel about being relocated?

Marlene: Oh you mean to Colorado- I was married- and my husband worked for this U.S. Senator<sup>#</sup> my father was taken to San Francisco and I would get passes to go see him. When he would see me he would cry. He said he wasn't being fed just bread and water. He wasn't being questioned. And I would bring him clothes and the next time I visited him he didn't have the clothes. And then those other people that were there -their families couldn't see them-but I could always see my dad. Me and Tayco's(I think she is referring to Tayeko Uyeda Sumigawa)brother always went together. The other families didn't go so they would ask me about it-My dad was in San Francisco You know it was really hard to see your father who was always so strong crying like a baby-this is before we went to Merced- from there he was taken to New Mexico-and then we went to Merced and from there we went to Colorado-and that train ride to Colorado was something-the soldiers would walk up and down the aisle-some of the soldier would be singing Holy-Holy- Holy- and then the train would stop somewhere-it could be Utah and they would have us get out and stretch and walk-we were afraid to get too far from the train-afraid they would leave us there.

We would stay close to the train. We didn't want to get left in the desert. And then finally-how many days it took I don't know. And then we arrived in Colorado and there were these small rooms-



I remember we got to Colorado a little late and all of the rooms were taken. So with another couple we had to share our space. We hung blankets to separate the room. There was my husband and myself, my mom and Dad and Lily and Sam. We were late because we went on a Greyhound bus from Merced. (I don't understand this part as previously they went on the train. I think her brother Jim and Jim's wife were with them also. Marlene's brother George had enlisted at the beginning of the war.)

So it was one room and there was another couple and we had to share it with them--so we hung up blankets to separate the room--

Althea: How long were you there?

Marlene: About a year and a half--(they were in Colorado 4 years--it was about a year and a half when they could take their cars to Colorado) there was my father and my sister-in-law and then --(it cut out again) then we were coming home because we had cars--not everybody had cars--Harry McNulty's father-in-law--brought the cars to Reno--there was Sam's car and my father's car--Clark-- that was his name he brought the cars to Reno--and George (Marlene's husband) and I came out and it was the first time I had ever been in Reno and wow--I saw all these fancy girls and I thought we were in fairyland Oh Wow! There were lots of people gambling--Wow--and then we took the cars and I took one and he took the other and I followed him as we went back to Colorado--I said "Don't leave me--Don't let me out of your sight--we got separated in Denver at commute time--coming home to Colorado--No one had cars in camp--I don't know how we got to bring our cars--and we got lost and I didn't know what to do--I decided to go to the police station and hoped that George would have sense enough to come there also and then I spotted him-- and my father gave us money and he told us to stay at a nice motel--Don't stay in any cheap place--

Stay in nice places--So we came to a hotel in Utah and the sign at the desk said Vacancy--and when we asked for a room the lady at the desk turned the sign around that now said No Vacancy--I said to George, "What are we going to do?" And we found an Oriental place and the only thing they had was a storage room that was so dirty and I said to George, "I am not laying my head on a pillow in that place." It was dangerous and kind of scary. So I remember covering myself with a jacket or coat or whatever. And we slept in the car. And then we got back to the camp and my mother got sick one winter. She had a fever of 103 or 104. She had this fever for three days. We were afraid she was expiring. We took her to the camp dispensary and we finally got to see a Dr. and he said he would see her in a couple of days. We told him she was expiring. My dad said he was going to drive to Denver



with her. And the Dr. said on my day off I will look at her. Well by the time his day off came she was gone. My dad was so sad that he died a year later after that. We came home and I can remember my dad holding the urn with her ashes on his lap all the way home in the car. That was my only regret losing my mother there. If we were not there she could have gotten treatment. She was so young she was only 50 years old. We were gone 4 years.

Althea: When you were in Colorado you said Harro Jensen's brother-in-law was running your place.

Marlene: Yes, Harro Jensen's brother-in-law Andy Harton. He had my brother's chickens if I'm not mistaken.

Althea: Did you get your chicken's back?

Marlene: Oh no by then they were too old. So they had to sell them cheap, too. When we got home my older brother went into it. My father wasn't not in that condition any more. I remember my father wouldn't let me go to my mother's funeral because I was pregnant at the time. No, he wouldn't let me go.

Althea: Can you tell again about your two dogs that you had left four years before and when you came home they were so happy to see all of you.

Marlene: Oh yes, my brother George said the dogs jumped up and all over him when he came home after being away for four years. They were so happy to see us. We have the picture of them in that large photo of our chicken ranch in Penngrove that we rented from Elphicks. (Marlene has on her family room wall a 7 ft by 2 ft. brown and white picture of her family and the two dogs and their chicken ranch with the chickens all outside. It is so typical of chicken farms in the 1920's with the colony houses and the large chicken houses, tank house and home. She is so proud of it.)

Althea: Tell me about your son Gary and his family.

Marlene: Gary is married to Irene who is also a research chemist. They have two children. Gregory is going to the University of California in San Diego. And Gwynne who is going to be a senior in high school in September. She is getting all kinds of offers from colleges. She doesn't want to go to an all girls college she wants to go to a co-educational one. Gary, my son, went to UC Berkley. And then he went to Washington State for his P.H.D. The UC climate today is a little different than when Gary went there, you know. When Gary went there it was about the time that Mario Savio was there. Gary lives in Larkspur with his family. He works for ~~Exxon~~ *Chevron* as a research chemist. Gwynne, his daughter, is going down to Mexico this summer with a group call Amigos de Prado, I believe. They are going into the poor rural area and try to help the people. I am a little worried about



her going down there. There are no conveniences. She has to stay for 7 weeks, I believe. She and her brother are so close. It was really hard for them when he first went to UC San Diego. They missed each other so much. You know both Gregory and Gwynne speak Spanish. So when they wanted to talk about something they would converse in Spanish then their parents and us didn't know what they were saying.



PETALUMA HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
Oral History Program

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PLACE 260 Lohman Lane  
Petaluma, Cal. 94952

DATE 9/93

Marlene Masade  
(Interviewee)

Aether Torbett  
(for the Petaluma Historical Museum)

\*Please include names of mother and grandmother

SEE THANK YOU



PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM  
Oral History Program  
Narrator Personal Information Questionnaire

Name MASADA MARLENE C MIYANO  
Last First Middle (Maiden)

Address 260 LOHRMAN LANE  
PETALUMA, CA 94952

Marital status: Married ☒ Single ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☐

Birthdate 1-15-19 Birthplace PENNGROVE, CA

Length of residence in Petaluma (or Sonoma County) 74 yrs

Education: Elementary school WILSON

Secondary school PETALUMA JR. HIGH + HIGH SCHOOL Grad 12

College \_\_\_\_\_ Grad \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation(s) or former occupations(s) WORKED IN HATCHERY, CANDIED  
EGGS, WORKED FOR CO MAKING FILTERS FOR THE  
SPACE PROGRAM.

Travels JAPAN 2 TIMES, NEW YORK AND THE EAST  
COAST.

Organizations, clubs JACL, ENMANOTO, BUDDHIST WOMEN'S  
CLUB

Other special interests GARDEN

Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU!



# PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

## Oral History Program Family History Questionnaire

MARLENE MASADA

Name	Birthdate	Birthplace	Deceased? Date
Parents* <u>ISHITARO MIYANO</u>		<u>JAPAN</u>	<u>1947</u>
<u>TAMINO MIYANO (KOMETO)</u>		<u>JAPAN</u>	<u>1945</u>
Brothers & Sisters			
<u>SAM. MIYANO</u>	<u>12-18-22</u>	<u>PERRA GROVE</u>	
<u>LILY MIYANO YAMAMOTO</u>	<u>11-24-24</u>		
Grand-parents*			
Spouse			
<u>GEORGE MASADA</u>	<u>2-10-17</u>	<u>YUBA COUNTY</u>	
Children			
<u>GARY MASADA</u>	<u>1-25-45</u>	<u>ANACHE COLORADO</u>	
Grandchildren			
<u>GREGORY MASADA</u>	<u>7-20-74</u>	<u>CORTE MADERA, CA</u>	
<u>GWYNNE MASADA</u>	<u>8-20-76</u>	<u>CORTE MADERA, CA</u>	

\*Please include maiden name of mother and grandmothers.

THANK YOU!